

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 10 January 2018 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 22 January 2018 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Shane Hebb (Deputy Chair), Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Deborah Huelin, Brian Little, Susan Little and Aaron Watkins

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sharon Bayliss, Director of Commercial Services
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Steve Cox, Corporate Director Place
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
David Lawson, Assistant Director of Law & Governance
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

75. Minutes

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 December 2017 were approved as a correct record.

76. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

77. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

78. Statements by the Leader

The Leader welcomed Members and Officers; wishing them a Happy New year. He updated all present on the Clean it, Cut it, Fill it scheme. In doing so Councillor Gledhill highlighted that between 01 April and 31 December:

- Approximately 4,564 potholes had been filled;
- Total tonnage of rubbish collected was 1,296 tons which consisted of 68,038 bags of rubbish and 38,641 bins being emptied;

- 9,300 acres of grass had been cut, which was the equivalent to the size of Buckingham Palace.

The Leader continued to inform Cabinet that Thurrock would again be marking International Holocaust Memorial Day on Friday 26 January at 11am at the High View Avenue Memorial Gardens in Grays. He explained a further event would be held at Thameside Theatre on the evening of the 26th January between 4.00pm – 7.00pm.

The Leader also advised that the Give a Gift campaign raised over £7,500 and thousands of presents had been donated to women's shelters, foodbanks and local children in need.

79. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Halden addressed Cabinet Members regarding the consultation into the future of services based at Orsett Hospital, following a press release from the Labour Party.

He continued to highlight the consultation had begun in December and would run up until 9 March 2018. It was already the subject of 30 tweets on social media, from not only the Council but the NHS, STP and Basildon Hospital. Members heard the consultation was also the subject of a motion at Full Council and a report was being presented to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Portfolio Holder remarked it was important that all residents took part in the consultation, which was to run for 14 weeks. He assured Members that there would be no changes made to Orsett Hospital, until such time as other resources were up and running within Thurrock.

80. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There were no petitions submitted.

81. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader of the Council advised that no questions had been submitted by Non-Executive Members.

82. Matters Referred to the Cabinet for Consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Leader of the Council informed Members that no matters had been referred to the Cabinet by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

He continued to add there would be a report from the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in relation the Grass Tax and their recommendations, which was he was mindful to accept.

83. Lower Thames Crossing Task Force Update Report (Decision 0110457)

Councillor Gledhill invited Councillor Peter Smith, Chair of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, to present the report to Cabinet Members.

Councillor Smith explained that the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Task Force had met monthly since September 2017. Along with cross-party involvement, the taskforce also included representatives from the local community including businesses, local residents and the Thames Crossing Action Group.

He commented that the Task Force had encountered difficulties with Highways England, ranging from weaknesses highlighted by their presentations to lack of communication and failure to respond to queries. He guaranteed that nevertheless, the Task Force would continue to work collectively for the good of the Borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration congratulated Councillor Smith on the work of the Task Force and remarked that they had the weight of the Council behind them.

Councillor Gledhill, Leader of the Council, thanked the Task Force for their joint working with local businesses and residents to ensure the voice of Thurrock was heard. He continued to state that all Group Leaders had met with Highways England raising their concerns and had urged them to contact the Task Force.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet noted the work of the Task Force.

84. A Sustainable Children's Social Care System for the Future: Annual Public Health Report 2017 (Decision 0110452)

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Health started by praising the work of the Director of Public Health and his team for all of the hard work they have carried out.

He continued by informing Cabinet that the report analysed the reasons for growing pressures on the system, produced forecasts for future demand and made recommendations on how the system could become more sustainable. In particular, seeing the whole case not just a child or family who required a certain service and then being left in a system.

Councillor Halden further observed that, moving forwards, issues such as mental health would need to be addressed as this was not something which could be handled in a classroom. He stated that a failure to act could be more costly in the long term.

Councillor S. Little thanked Councillor Halden for the report and congratulated the Director of Public Health and his team for all of their hard work. She further stated that it was important that the focus was kept on what could be done to help children and young people in care.

The Leader echoed his congratulations to the Portfolio Holder and the Public Health team. He commented it was the Council's responsibility to ensure that children in care, were given the help they needed in the first instance and not left in the care system.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the contents and recommendations of the report be noted by Cabinet.**
- 2. That Cabinet approved to hold a Mental Health summit to address emotional and mental health issues which contribute to the wider health and wellbeing issues amongst young people.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

85. Local Council Tax Scheme (Decision 0110453)

Councillor Hebb addressed Members, notifying them that he was leading on the Debt Summit which had been discussed at the last Cabinet meeting and already had involvement from all Groups of the Council.

He continued to state that the Council had agreed to support residents who were finding it difficult to pay their Council Tax and further details on this would be given in due course.

Councillor Halden commented upon the exemption tax for care leavers in Thurrock, he remarked that a report would be presented to February Cabinet.

The Leader welcomed the report and highlighted the importance of residents contacting the Council if they found themselves struggling to pay their Council Tax. He continued to make it clear that on the Local Tax Council Scheme, if help was sought, a resident would have to pay a minimum of 25% of their Council Tax.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommend to Council that there are no changes to the scheme for 2018/19.

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

86. South Essex 2050 (Decision 0110454)

Councillor Gledhill, Leader of the Council, presented the report explaining that Local Authorities in the South Essex area had agreed to work more closely together.

He continued by assuring Members and residents that the South Essex 2050 didn't mean the Council would be giving up any services or would make commitments to sharing services. It was about working together to make voices heard.

The Leader notified the Cabinet he, and the other Council Leaders, had met with local MPs of the six Local Authorities in Parliament earlier that day, who were in turn due to meet again in February. Councillor Gledhill mentioned it was important to remember the Memorandum of Understanding was to support all Local Authorities working together for the better of South Essex as a whole.

Councillor Coxshall remarked it was the Council's duty to co-operate with other authorities across South Essex. He continued to observe that the borough being so close to London was not only an advantage but also, at times, a burden.

The Leader touched on recommendation 1.4 within the report, which highlighted the Government's support of joint working, and that funding would be available to bid for to support the Local Authorities in question work together.

He also thanked the other Group Leaders for their support.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Noted and supports the progress made by Leaders and Chief Executives on strategic place shaping in the South Essex 2050 Vision.**
- 2. Noted and supports the expression of interests endorsed by Planning Portfolio Holders/Cabinet Members to become a pilot of the Government's Statement of Common Ground for plan-making.**
- 3. Noted and supports a programme of further collaboration on key strategic place shaping and cross boundary planning policy matters, and agrees to allocate appropriate additional resources to support this.**
- 4. Noted and supports the expression of interest submitted to the Government's Planning Delivery Fund for up to £250,000 for assistance with joint working.**

5. **Noted and supports the creation of a Joint Committee with the title of “Association of South Essex Local Authorities” as the overarching body responsible for managing these initiatives.**
6. **Noted and supports the preparation and delivery of a statutory joint strategic plan for South Essex to ensure that cross boundary strategic planning issues are dealt with in an appropriate way.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

87. Extension of Home to School Transport Contracts (Decision 0110455)

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Health introduced the item stating a review of transport services provided across the Council was underway to ensure the Council was meeting the needs of residents whilst achieving value for money. It was observed that all current home-to-school transport contracts would expire in July 2018.

Councillor Halden continued to assure Members that there would be no changes made to any in-year offer. He explained the Schools Transport Policy was inherited when he became Portfolio Holder in 2016 and it made sense to extend the contract for a year to complete the review and start afresh.

The Leader of the Council commented that he had hoped Cabinet would not be agreeing to extensions of policies, however on this occasion it was clear this was to improve the service provided.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. **Agreed to extend the current home to school contacts for one year from July 2018 as provided by section 14 of the Councils Contract Procedure Rules pending the outcome of the current service review.**
2. **Agreed to waive the requirement to complete a competitive tender as provided by section 13 of the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules for one year.**
3. **Approved the continuation of the current arrangements for delegated authority for the Corporate Director of Children’s Services in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder to approve the award of these contracts for the period of the extension requested.**
4. **That a further paper outlining the service changes and seeking approval to enter into a competitive tender process in line with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules is presented to Cabinet in November 2018.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

88. Medium Term Financial Strategy Update (Decision 0110456)

Councillor Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance, presented the report reminding Cabinet Members of his announcement at the last meeting, that the Council had a balanced budget. He continued to comment the Council was becoming more self-sufficient and with previous Governments overspend, it was important that the Council looked at different ways of working.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance stated the continued work of the Council Spending Review was significant, as it encouraged cross-party working such as the Investment Strategy.

Members heard in addition to the savings proposals that were set out in the report to Council in February 2017, Service Review proposals were being developed and were summarised within the report. Councillor Hebb highlighted there were no further savings being proposed due to the success of the investment approach, which had been endorsed by both Cabinet and Council.

Councillor Hebb informed Cabinet a 3% increase in the Adult Social Care precept would continue into 2018/19 and there was an assumption that a 1.99% general Council Tax until 2020/21 would be included. He continue to state that, should there be an increase in Council Tax, Thurrock still had the third lowest Council Tax amongst all Unitary Authorities and, subsequently, the third lowest budget.

The Portfolio Holder continued to make the following announcements:

- That the Cabinet would be spending over £500,000 extra on the Clean It, Cut It component of the programme.
- The Council was committed to ensuring benefits of the surplus reached all parts of the borough; there would be a heavy focus on the condition of the A13 and other highways with regards to central reservations cleanliness, and sign cleaning/repairs.
- New equipment would be purchased for the recently enlarged front line teams which would allow the council to focus on graffiti cleaning, drain and gully maintenance and improving the park cleanliness across the borough.
- It had been agreed to spend £750,000 extra on the Fill It component of the programme. The council would be going further with road resurfacing and pot hole filling ambitions, including remarking white lines across the borough which were in need.

- The Cabinet had chosen to spend more on developing the Local Plan consultations over the next year. This would include funds to gather the data required by the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force.
- Lastly the Cabinet were opting to spend £250,000 on anti-social behaviour prevention and were determined to reverse the anti-social behaviour challenges faced within local communities, families and friends.

Councillor Coxshall commented the news of an additional £2.3million in total was fantastic. He continued by mentioning the funding for consultations and the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force meant the council could obtain the facts they required.

Councillor Watkins, Portfolio Holder for Environment, remarked on the fact that funds were being brought back into the department which meant that, with the new equipment being purchased, services could continue to improve.

The Leader of the Council addressed Members stating that within 19 months of obtaining administration there had been a 40% increase in reserves and services were becoming more self-sufficient. He continued by thanking Councillor Hebb and his teams for their hard work over the last few months.

Councillor Gledhill observed the funding for the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, he remarked it was the councils job to complete different aspects of Air Quality and Road Movement reports, so officers had the facts and data required.

Lastly the Leader commented on anti-social behaviour, stating it was an important topic on which he was working alongside the Chief Executive. He further commented the pilot scheme was called 'Stop It' and focused on all levels anti-social behaviour.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Noted the assumption of a 3% Council Tax increase to provide additional funding towards the cost of Adult Social Care;**
- 2. Noted that, in line with previous reports, this report assumes a 1.99% general Council Tax increase but that the local government settlement allows for an increase up to 2.99%;**
- 3. Determined how to utilise the expected one off surplus balances in both 2017/18 and 2018/19;**
- 4. Endorsed the use of the reclassified Minimum Revenue Provision as set out in section 4; and**

- 5. Noted this draft budget and ask Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment and make recommendations back to Cabinet in February ahead of Full Council.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

The meeting finished at 8.10 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**